

MTSA Regulations found at 33 CFR Subchapter H
Parts 101, 104, 105.

#30-04 JUN 17, 2004---POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL FAQ

Q. What procedures should Coast Guard personnel follow to gain access to commercial vessels and waterfront facilities?

Ans. A. Access Procedures: Access control is the cornerstone of the new security regime. Due to the new maritime security requirements of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code and the US Maritime Transportation Security Act, industry must fully enact a series of new security procedures under penalty of potentially serious civil and criminal sanctions, operational controls and economic consequences. Recognizing that security is a shared responsibility, with both the private and public sectors playing a significant role in this new global maritime security regime, law enforcement personnel should perform the following actions when attempting to access a commercial vessel or facility when performing duties in the normal course of business:

- (1) Identify yourself and organization verbally;
- (2) Present an official government issued identification card at each security check-point, being cognizant of protecting personal information (Ref: 33 CFR 101.515);
- (3) Explain, if necessary, that the ID card is federal property and therefore cannot and will not be surrendered;
- (4) Sign the visitor logbook, provide an office contact number if requested, and ensure that personal information (such as social security number) is not entered into the log;
- (5) Explain, if necessary, that properly identified law enforcement personnel on official business are not required to consent to a baggage or government vehicle search;
- (6) Explain, if necessary, that law enforcement personnel are authorized to carry firearms while conducting routine operations on a vessel or facility;
- (7) Recommend the facility or vessel amend their security plan if their approved security plan conflicts with the procedures outlined here for dealing with law enforcement officers; and
- (8) Accept a personnel escort if requested by the vessel or facility security representative, except on those infrequent occasions in which law enforcement officials have specific safety or security concerns that warrant declining the offer of an escort.

These procedures shall not apply to law enforcement officers accessing vessels or facilities during emergencies or exigent circumstances in the performance of their duties.

B. ID Card Requirements: 33 CFR 101.515(a)(1)-(4) states “Any personal identification credential accepted under the access control provisions of this subchapter must, at a minimum, meet the following requirements: be laminated or otherwise secure against tampering; contain the individual’s full name (full first and last names, middle initial is acceptable); contain a photo that accurately depicts that individual’s current facial appearance; and bear the name of the issuing authority.

C. Facility/Vessel Access Obligations: 33 CFR 101.515(c) states “Vessel, facility, and OCS facility owners and operators must permit law enforcement officials, in the performance of their official duties, who present proper identification in accordance with this section to enter or board that vessel, facility, or OCS facility at any time, without delay or obstruction. Law enforcement officials, upon entering or boarding a vessel, facility, or OCS facility, will, as soon as practicable, explain their mission to the Master, owner, or operator, or their designated agent.”

D. Testing of Facility or Vessel Access Control: Law enforcement officials should expect to be challenged when attempting to access a facility or vessel. An attempt to test security procedures by fabricating or refusing to show credentials harms the government’s overall credibility and shall not be undertaken. It should be noted that the maritime security regulations in 33 CFR Parts 101 through 106 were approved by DHS and each of its component agencies, and the Department and each agency head has stated a commitment to fully implementing the regulatory requirements, for both industry and law enforcement officials. An owner or operator who appropriately denies access to an individual who refuses to properly establish his or her identity shall be in compliance with the MTSA and its associated regulations.

Owners/operators faced with any official who declines to establish his or her identity in accordance with 33 CFR Part 104 are encouraged to provide the official with a copy of the regulations and the relevant section on access control. If owners/operators have doubts about the authenticity of an official government identification document or credential or are concerned that denying access to an official may result in negative consequences, they should contact the cognizant Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP) or appropriate agency head for guidance and assistance in effectively resolving the issue.

The following outlines appropriate law enforcement officer/COTP actions:

1. Swift and decisive actions shall be initiated if law enforcement personnel are denied access to a facility or vessel after complying with the above access procedures. The COTP should be immediately notified if law enforcement officials’ access to a vessel or facility is delayed or obstructed. While what constitutes delay or obstruction is highly fact dependent, the Coast Guard does

not anticipate access procedures for law enforcement officials in routine circumstances complying with the procedures above to exceed 10 minutes.

2. The requirement to notify the COTP does not preclude the law enforcement officer from taking any lawful action to compel compliance with lawful orders. Law enforcement officers have the right to access vessels and facilities subject to inspection without delay or obstruction. Further, law enforcement officers have the right to use reasonable force to compel compliance with lawful orders, including orders by the law enforcement officer to permit access. If time and the operational situation permit, however, it is preferable to engage COTP assistance in responding to non-compliant vessel or facility operators.
3. In addition to lawful actions taken by law enforcement officers to gain access to vessels and facilities, COTPS shall consider the following actions for each type of commercial entity that is non-compliant in providing access to properly credentialed law enforcement officials:
 - (1) **U.S. vessels:** Issuance of COTP Order to cease operations, COTP authorization to search and/or take full or partial possession or control of the vessel in accordance with 33 CFR 6.04-8, and appropriate civil penalty/criminal sanctions.
 - (2) **Foreign Vessels:** IMO detention, expulsion of vessel from U.S. waters, COTP authorization to search and/or take full or partial possession or control of the vessel in accordance with 33 CFR 6.04-8,, and appropriate civil penalty/criminal sanctions.
 - (3) **Waterfront Facility:** Issuance of COTP Order to suspend operations, COTP authorization to inspect and/or search the facility and/or any person, article, or thing thereon or therein (including conducting such activity in conjunction with other available law enforcement personnel), and appropriate civil penalty/criminal sanctions.

CG NOTE: Relevant Border and Transportation Security (BTS) policy “Access to Commercial Vessels and Waterfront Facilities” was issued in a BTS Policy Memorandum on 24 August 2004. A copy of the BTS Policy Memo can be found on the CG Intranet under ‘Policy Guidance’ at <http://cgweb.comdt.uscg.mil/G-Mp/Helpdesk.htm> or on the CG Internet under ‘Policy Guidance’ at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mp/mtsa.shtml>.

Note: For further guidance, a facility owner/operator should contact their local Captain of the Port (COTP/FMSC).